

A BASHFUL MAN'S SOLILOQUY.

BY CULMA CROLY.

Well, they say it "takes all sorts of people to make a world," and, on that ground, I suppose that we bashful people may lay claim to existence. *Lay claim*—did I say? When did a bashful man ever lay claim to anything, even his own eyes and nose, except in solitude, and in the innermost depths of his consciousness? There, indeed, we are as brave, as confident of our own endowments and capabilities, as any creature that beholds the sunshine. Nay, with Self sitting both as judge and jury in the *ex-parte* council of the powers within, we often reach the comfortable conclusion, that all mankind are fools, and that *we* are persecuted and unappreciated beings. But only force us into that incongruous *melee* which they call "Society," and as naturally as a dunce takes his place at the foot of his class, we creep along through the by-ways, and under the eaves, looking askance at the sons and daughters of our father Adam, as if to apologize for the accident of a common lineage with themselves.

A poet could sing,

"So sweet the blush of bashfulness,
E'en pity scarce could wish it less;"

and it may be a very pretty thing with the accompaniments of "a snowy brow,"—"auburn locks,"—"eyes of heavenly azure," and a few other *et ceteras*. But much as I would like to appropriate the quotation, for my own benefit, I fear the poet would have wished his lines unwritten, had he seen the rubicund hues which adorn my visage, on making my *entree* at the party last night.

Just to think of me, whiskered, and six feet high, but *feeling* as tall as Goliath of Gath, marching into a saloon filled with beauty and fashion, with my *mitten* on! I did know better; but the inward struggle I had to pass through, before I could fairly plunge into that forest of eyes, made me quite forget my outward habiliments. And then, after I had made my best bow to the company—and nearly lost my equilibrium in the exploit—to think of my being forced to make my blushes conspicuous, by enthroning myself on the piano-stool. No other seat was vacant—and for a bashful man to stand up, *all alone*, in a room full of people—it is distress.

How relieved I was, when a good lady near me said smilingly, "Mr. Green, pray give us a tune." I knew, and the company had heard, that I had some musical talent, and here was a fine opportunity of turning my back to them.

But, alas! I had brought both hands down upon the keys, with a nervous trepidation, before I observed that they were yet encased in their winter envelopes. I do wonder what sort of a jargon I made after I pulled them off! The guests were too polite to laugh, but they certainly did look astonished.

And then when I began to grow desperate, and rose abruptly from the piano, to have Mrs. Stone call out from the opposite side of the room,

"Mr. Green, you look warm. Don't stay so near the fire. Here is a seat by the window!"

I could appreciate her kindness, in wishing to

relieve my embarrassment, but *she* never suffered from bashfulness, or she would not have so much as hinted that I had a red face.

Dear me! those demure young misses in the corner, how mischievously they were noticing my movements!

I did not see, but I felt their eyes upon me, as I strode across the room, with what seemed to me, the tread of a militia-captain—feeling as though all my muscles were stiffened into wires—imagining that every joint in my frame was moving at right angles with every other joint,—and that a torrent of red-hot molten lead was rushing to my face, ears, and to the very tips of my fingers.

Did the people think that there was an earthquake when I sat down? I did. But, once seated, I grew calmer, and began to look about me.

And now I recollect that I caught myself indulging in a most ridiculous feeling. When I saw half-a-dozen young exquisites parading before me, with heads redolent of Macassar, but utterly guiltless of brains, smiling and chatting nonsense with the ladies, as if their patient listeners were perfectly charmed with their silly small talk, I did wish for the thinnest coating of that substance which rendered them so impervious to all sensitiveness. I believe that chemists call said material an alloy of zinc and copper. I wonder why the tailors do not keep ready-made suits of it, for bashful people to hire in emergencies like mine, just as they do life-preservers, and fire-proof coats.

No end to my trials! In the midst of my observations, officious Mrs. Stone must turn round suddenly, and introduce me to an intelligent female acquaintance of hers.

I was taken by surprise. After the usual preliminaries, I felt my lips performing sundry contortions and gyrations, mechanically striving to emit the suitable words. At last I ejaculated, "Good afternoon!" (it was evening) "Miss Green," (calling her by my name instead of hers), "How is the health of your family?" (I did not know whether she had kith or kin in the world.) And then I precipitated myself into a chair, leaving her standing directly before me. And yet I am not ill-mannered;—and it was not I that did it, but this bashfulness that possesses me!

Yes, it is a sin as well as a shame, to be bashful. For, in parting with my hostess—the evening *did* drag to an end at last—I told one of the most wretched fibs ever uttered. The lady said:

"She hoped I had enjoyed the evening," and I replied, "Certainly, certainly, *very much, indeed!*"

Does Baron Munchausen equal that?

If I am ever inveigled into a fashionable party again, I mean to inhale chloroform immediately before my entrance.

Out upon this bashfulness! Like another faculty which Shakspeare has painted with painful, quivering truthfulness, it is "A blushing, shame-faced spirit, that mutinies in a man's bosom, makes him a coward, and fills him full of obstacles."

"I'll not meddle with it!"

Vain boast! Let not the bashful man expect, through his mortal career, ever to escape the ghost that stands before him, gigantic and immovable; for it is the apparition of—himself!